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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001878

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: CONFLICT OVER REFERENDUM AND ELECTIONS

REF: A. LA PAZ 1866  
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 1658

Classified By: Acting EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 b,d

[1](#)1. (SBU) On September 1, the National Electoral Court (CNE) made public a series of interpretive letters that challenged President Evo Morales' supreme decrees of August 28 (ref A). The CNE demanded laws (through congress) to call for the referendum on the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) constitution and to elect subprefects and departmental advisors. Acting-President Garcia Linera immediately refuted the CNE's right to make this decision, and from Iran President Evo declared that the CNE had placed itself "against the Bolivian people. It is a decision that they took while subordinating themselves to the neoliberal right, because questioning and auditing the voting roll is a measure requested by the right, by the prefects who obey interest groups and not the Bolivian people." Meanwhile, Senate President Oscar Ortiz (Podemos, Santa Cruz) said that the congress would never convoke a referendum on a constitutional text that did not represent a consensus.

[1](#)2. (C) After CNE President Jose Luis Exeni publicly requested international assistance in an audit of Bolivia's voter rolls, on September 3 the CNE placed a paid ad in La Paz's leading daily that includes the text of the CNE's September 1 resolution to have a voter roll audit. CNE Resolution 149/2008 states that the CNE intends to audit the voter rolls during September through December of 2008, "with the participation of international organizations such as the OAS, the UN, the EU, and others of similar nature who would wish to cooperate with the National Electoral Court in this activity and with the support of international experts...with the participation of the Departmental Electoral Courts. (Note: EU representatives have previously told us that they are willing to participate in an audit of the voter rolls if they receive a formal request. This paid announcement from the CNE may be the closest thing to a formal request that the CNE can manage, since President Morales and the executive branch will block any attempt at a traditional formal request. End note.)

14. (C) Opposition politicians are calling for an audit of the voter rolls to investigate allegations of fraud and voter roll irregularities. Many of the irregularities discovered by the press, opposition leaders, and Departmental Electoral Courts stem from the Venezuelan-funded free ID program (ref B) which was targeted at MAS-affiliated areas and resulted in numerous cases of incorrect registration (people receiving multiple IDs and voter numbers, ineligible people such as non-citizens receiving voter IDs, IDs issued with no picture or incorrect data.) (Note: Before the August 10 recall referendum, the OAS announced that it had "received information about irregularities" which the OAS had turned over to the CNE. After the recall vote, the OAS released a public statement that said that the OAS observers had decided that the margin of "contamination" of the voter rolls was sufficiently low that the voters could be confident in the results of the referendum, although the OAS also stated that it made this decision "without having made an in-depth technical analysis of the voter rolls." End note.)

15. (SBU) CONALDE, the grouping of opposition prefects and civic groups, issued a statement September 3, announcing the resolution of CONALDE and civic groups of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, and Tarija. CONALDE's five point plan includes:  
--increasing road blockades in the opposition departments to demand the return of the IDH hydrocarbons taxes, warning that "we will not be responsible for any action that impedes the supply of hydrocarbons for export";  
--rejecting and blocking the central government's goal of "imposing a reform constitutional text that lacks any legality or legitimacy and was written with the blood of Bolivian brothers...we ratify our decision to not permit any constitutional referendum that would approve that constitution in our departments";  
--deepening the implementation of the autonomy statutes, while "applauding and supporting Chuquisaca's firm determination of convoking a departmental autonomy referendum";  
--denouncing the "central government's political persecution of the departmental authorities and civic leaders, with lawsuits lacking in legal basis";  
--"calling on citizens, organizations and democratic institutions of the country, without distinction of race, political position or religion, to form a wide front in defense of democracy, which would work for national peace..."

16. (SBU) The state news service ABI focused on CONALDE's warning in the first point, headlined its article, "CONALDE resolves to radicalize the blockades and threats to cut gas exports." ABI also reported that "Curiously, when they wanted to draft the conclusions they invited the PODEMOS members of congress to leave, because apparently the prefects needed to speak alone." Leaving a meeting of the cabinet soon after the CONALDE announcement was made public, Justice Minister Celima Torrico told the press that the cabinet had decided to go ahead with the referendum on December 7, despite the objections of the CNE. Meanwhile, isolated incidents of violence between opposition and government-aligned groups continue.

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